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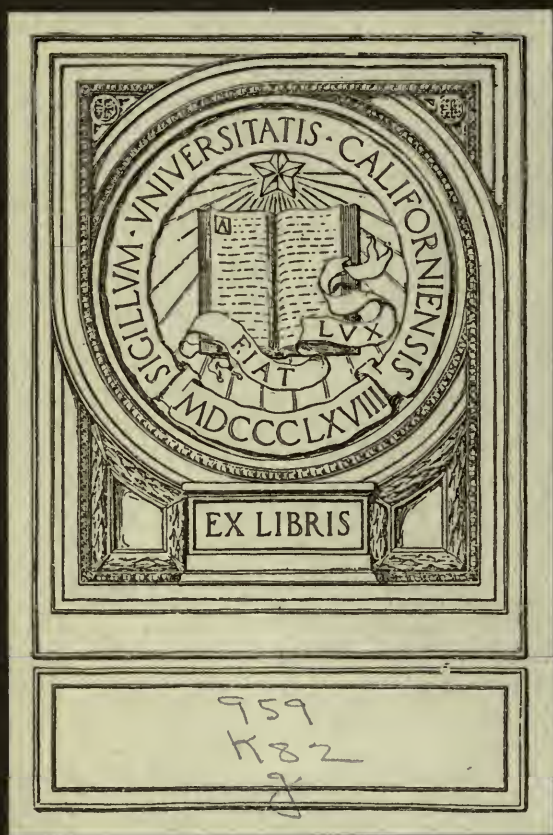
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THE GUERDON

III

GARRY LYMAN BOOPMAN

TO YOU
BY H. L. KOOPMAN

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TO
THE MEMORIES THAT HALLOW
MY BOYHOOD'S HOMELAND

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NOTE

The scene of the events described is chiefly Freeport, Maine, on Casco Bay. The teller of the story was born evidently near the middle of the last century, suffered his accident at about twenty, and was restored to health at about forty. He may now be supposed as a man of three-score and ten to be giving to the press his manuscript already a generation old — a memory out of a bygone world. The “dial of the ages” is the circle marked by the precession of the equinoxes, around whose circumference the pole moves once in 25,800 years. The present pole star and Vega are nearly opposite each other, and take their turns at being pole star at intervals of about half this period.

THE GUERDON

IN THE SACHEM'S SEAT

So at length to the top
Of this wide-revealing mount
I have dragged my helpless form,
The same that ages ago,
In another life of mine,
Tore me away from my rest
And dashed up this rocky slope
In its furious thirst for toil,
In its lust of strength for strife.

Strange that memory persists
Across this gulf, that I
Can think of myself in days
That are one to me with the days
Of the Pilgrims, the Crusades,
The Pyramids, yea, with the past
Of him who scratched on the tusk
Of the mammoth the shaggy form
Of the beast that bore it aloft.
All are blent into one,
Memory, history, trace,
Equally far away;
And yet men agree in the tale
That only twice has the sun
Quickened the earth into life
Since I was that embryo self.

None of my seeking it is,
My life on this side the gulf.
To live was the last thing I dreamed.
I cried when I leaped from the ice:
Here's for luck and the shore!
But that was only to hide
The reason deep in my heart
Why I took the desperate chance;
Yet the chance once taken, my strength
Put forth a will of its own,
And, battling defiant of hope,
Flung me at last on the shore.
Ten seconds before I leaped
Nothing was less in my thought.
Then it all flashed over my brain,

What before I would not admit,
That he was her love, not I.
There was life on the ice for but one;
Could I blast her life in its bud
When a leap would settle all,
The longing, the doubt, the ache,
When a leap would spare me the pain
Of seeing a joy that I willed,
Yet a joy that was wrought of my grief?
This too it did, in a way
That I could not foresee in the breath
Between the resolve of my will
And the icy clasp of the brine.

That was two winters ago,
At least as the world reckons time,
And out of that watery grave
I was born to a death in life.
Had it been best — God knows —
To have left me prone on the shore
Till my numbness hardened to frost,
And out of this earthly life
I had passed into that beyond?
Yea, but I have passed beyond,
Through the death of the body I bore,
Into the life of the soul.
In at that cavern of pain
I entered, a savage, a child,
A primal faun of the woods,
A being with hardly more thought
Than the maple that sports with the wind.
Forth from its hither door,
Wrecked in body, I come,
In spirit full-grown, and heir
To the thought of the ages foregone,
And claimant on all that shall bloom
In the infinite springtides of Mind.
This wrought Pain for me
And the breath of a quickening soul,
A great Physician's word,
To whom it was given to heal
More the spirit within
Than the body they laid at his feet.

She, meanwhile, far away,
Is happy with him she loves;
And I rejoice in the joy
That she took unaware from my hand.
But her joy may I never behold!
For, after all, this is earth,
Where grief is the shadow of love.

BY THE WINTER FIRE

WAS it only so, I ask,
My spirit could come to its own?
Was my soul so deeply immured
In its prison of flesh and strength
That only through pain and wrack
It could burst its way into light?
The light had been all around,
Illuming me from my birth;
It was I that could not see.
Some knowledge this earth compels,
The knowledge of food and fire,
Of clothing and shelter and kind.
But there the grannam flags,
As if her lesson were taught,
And frets if we ask for more,
As though that more were the charge
Of a higher teacher to give.
So from the most she hides
That she owns a loftier lore,
And babbling we go through life
Who should speak as men full-grown,
And halting we lag who should press
To the bounds of mortal ken.

I lay, the past a blight,
The future a blank unthought,
And Hope long dead and cold
In the arms of murdered Love;
And I said: When I woke that morn,
Why was no warning at hand
Of the crash that should bury my life?
What is it worth to know
If all we can know is the past?
As I spoke I became aware
Of two that stood by my bed.
Said the elder: Wait, and see

How souls are born into life,
In pain, as bodies are born.

Then, speaking to me, he said:
At last the keel of your thought
Has run aground on the shoal
That limits knowledge on earth.
Though his head be stuffed with lore
That was old in Babylon's prime,
Man's knowledge ends with the Now.
He knows not what is to be
At the next swift beat of his heart,
Nor indeed if again it shall beat.
So, in a myriad ways,
Even such as he cannot guess,
Man's knowledge is bounded and cramped;
And all because he is man
And can only know what his mind,
The tool of his knowledge, is gaged,
By the power that shaped it, to know.
But be sure that he whose wings
Are beating in vain and bruised
On the ultimate bound of thought,
Though he may not pass that bound,
Yet shall return in a strength
That is more than the strength of man.
As Antaeus, the son of Earth,
Sprang up renewed at the touch
Of his mother, so man becomes
Greater than man if he touch
The bound Heaven sets to his flight,
For the bound and the touch are of Heaven.
Nay, is it too much to say
That man then first becomes man
And worthy to enter in
As heir and son of God
When, baffled and sick at heart,
He finds that to be man
Means to be limited?

So saying, he left me alone,
Nor waited to answer one
Of the thousand questions that leaped
To stay him. Open-eyed
On the new world of thought revealed,
I stared entranced, as one
Who has strayed unawares to the brink
Of the Canyon's measureless gulf,

And spellbound, overwhelmed,
 At the splendor unrolled beyond sight,
 Wonders if what he sees
 Be Heaven or its reflex, Hell.
 Both has it proved to me —
 Heaven in the sense of power
 That comes to those who know,
 And Hell in the impotence
 Of knowledge confined and caged.

Again and often again
 My wise physician spake —
 While my body was growing wont
 To its new and feebler life —
 To quicken the life of my soul.
 He showed me how this world
 Of three dimensions, which seems
 The only possible world,
 With length and height and breadth
 The bounds of all that is,
 May be at the selfsame time
 A living and busy world
 Of more dimensions or less,
 A myriad even at once,
 And all as real as our own,
 And each with its own fixt laws,
 But each unknown to the rest;
 How in time our dimension is one,
 The future drawn out from the past
 In a single unvarying line,
 Not the plane of an infinite Now,
 Not the cube nor a higher power,
 Where time passes out of itself
 Into force — who knows? — or will.
 Such things my physician taught,
 Leading me by the hand,
 As one of prisoners twain
 In the dark might lead his mate
 To measure the walls of their cell.
 Thoughts that I never had dreamed,
 Which at first I could not grasp,
 He led me on to think,
 Because he found me, he said,
 A soul that was ready for birth;
 And he would, since never again
 Might I find delight in the strength
 Of my body, nor toil with my hands,
 I might find a greater in thought,

And bring men gold, he said,
 Who before had but quarried them stone.

AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER

LAST of a worn-out race,
 The end of a withered branch
 That has lagged behind the rest,
 Stinted and stunted, in me
 The men of my blood behold
 A life overleft from the age
 Of their grandsires, surviving alone
 From that generation outworn.
 Was this the fatal defect,
 The miser fault of my race,
 That it hoarded for length of days
 The force that should have been spent
 On fulness of life? But this
 I know at least, that the words
 Too late! Too late! have rung
 Life-long the knell of my hopes.

Too late was I born to share
 In the freeing of the slave;
 Too late to have welcomed death
 On the field of that glorious cause
 Overswept by the shining wings
 Of the Choosers of the Slain.
 Too late was I born for love, —
 But let me not wake that chord,
 Which is anguish. Let it suffice
 That I have outlived my race,
 And look back on its course as I might
 From beyond the portal of death.
 I know what my counsellor said
 For my comfort, and were it true
 Or false, 'twas at least not feigned.
 He held it the goal of a race,
 Of a long succession of lives,
 To produce a single soul;
 And, its consummation and end
 Achieved, it has served the will
 Of the World-soul, and then is free
 From allegiance to life on earth.

Meanwhile, below in the ooze,
 Overstrewn by the weariless tides,

Lies the gun that I flung from the ice,
 Already crumbling to rust,
 The force locked up in its breast
 Already dissolved and lost.
 Could I then have seen myself now,
 I had said it had been as well
 I were stretched by my gun in the slime;
 But now, from this aery of thought,
 I look on that life as at one
 With the life of the worm in the mud;
 And not for the body's health,
 For the bounding pulses of strength,
 Would I sink my soul again
 To the blindworm in the ooze.

WATCHING THE HAYMAKERS

How the tough ash bends with its dome
 Of clinging, odorous hay,
 Uplifted to crown the load!
 The pitcher from wrist to heel
 Tingles with rapture of strength
 As the true ash straightens back.
 He, as he stands half hid,
 With the fragrance canopied,
 The treader aloft on the load,
 The raker gleaning behind,
 And even the straining team,
 These are parcel and part
 Of the only peaceful life
 Our race has ever known
 Since man became more than beast.
 Is it any wonder my will
 From its prison of weakness yearns
 To be one with that conquering toil?
 That the sweet breath of the hay
 Borne from these fields and down
 From immemorial fields,
 Should bear away on its wings
 Thought and the joy of thought?

So from his desolate isle,
 Through the cloud-rifts of his pain,
 Looked Philoctetes in thought,
 Across the sundering deep,
 To the thronging plains before Troy,
 Where men, his comrades once,

Were winning immortal names
 In life or more glorious death.
 Two things alone he had left,
 His arrows, the gift of the God,
 And the knowledge that only through him
 Could victory at last be won;
 Though how he yet should serve,
 He, the banished and scorned,
 He could not conceive in his pain.

Year after year roars the fight
 But the end shall not be from force;
 The silent shafts of the God
 Alone can quiet its rage.
 This is the triumph of thought
 Over war and the tumult of war,
 Over din and disturbance of peace,
 The silent shafts of the God
 That conquer the world's new day.
 This battle of battles now joined —
 Mere prelude was all hitherto —
 Shall it still have a part for me?

AT THE BOWDOIN COMMENCEMENT MDCCCLXXV

PERFECTION of summer's morn, —
 The thought and the will of God
 Made real to mortal sense!
 Around my halting steps
 The dewdrops flash like gems,
 Each tiny radiance big
 With pride of telling the sun
 The emerald secret of earth,
 The sapphire lore of the sky.
 The birds on bush and spray
 Are taking Heaven with their storm
 Of melodious violence.
 From all its garland of days
 The year has plucked this one
 To lay like a rose at the feet
 Of the men we honor too
 How scantily with gesture and word! —
 The men, whom, about to join
 The Immortals, we mortals hail.

Might I have done so unblamed,
 I had knelt and kissed the hem

Of his garment, the singer crowned
 With the praise of the nations afar,
 But his home is here in our hearts.
 O sweet, benignant face!
 O voice of sympathy!
 That for evermore I shall see,
 I shall hear, while life endures!
 The ground thy feet have trod
 Is holy; the singing pines
 Their own song murmur no more
 But thine. If prayer has power
 To enrich a life so blest
 As thine through blessing glows,
 Daily, unknown to thee,
 Mine shall attend thy steps.
 But not of us who gaze,
 Nor of them around, the belov'd,
 Are thy thoughts today; they are given
 To him, thy companion in fame,
 As here in study, to him,
 The star-eyed, thunder-browed,
 Long since immortalized,
 Whom we miss today with a pang
 That darkens the smile of morn.

Beneath the spires I pass
 Into the roseate gloom;
 But broken today is the spell,
 For today my thoughts are of man,
 And how, though born of earth
 And weighted with earth, being man,
 Yet, being a son of God,
 He sets his face to the stars,
 And climbing the wall of the sky,
 Tramples them under his feet.
 O sacred spot of earth!
 Blest be their memory
 Who cleared thee, who reared thy walls,
 Who lit thy sacred lamps,
 And blest forevermore,
 From grateful age to age,
 Be they who guard thy shrine!

So one who is not of thee,
 Who never lit his lamp
 At learning's holy flame,
 But out of due time was born
 Into thy world of thought,

Prays, as beneath thy elms,
 He follows their shadows home.

THE LAUNCHING

I DIP my hand in the brine,
 And, lo! my pulses thrill
 With the traffic of the world.
 This is man's highway, this
 The road that has no end,
 But ever returns on itself,
 Encircling the islands and lands,
 And binding each to all.

Above me, huge and black,
 Looms the hulk with its pennons and flags,
 Clear at last of its props.
 Merry the throng on its deck,
 But louder they who below
 With clattering mallets toil
 Far under the frown of the hull,
 To set their captive free.
 The boys have deserted their boats,
 The fishers their lines, all eyes
 Even of the lovers, hand-claspt,
 Are fixed on the towering bulk
 That now as they gaze awakes
 From lifelessness into life.

The mass is thrilled with a soul;
 No longer a creature of earth,
 It puts forth an ocean will,
 And, spurning its mighty bands,
 Like Samson rending his withes,
 It plunges into the flood.
 The ways are a-smoke with the speed,
 A vast wave licks the strand,
 Across the tide comes the roar
 Of flying cables, and then
 The hulk that we saw is gone,
 As if earth had swallowed it up,
 In its room is a bare, blank space;
 But at anchor in mid-stream rides
 A new creation, unkin
 To aught we beheld before,
 An Aphrodite, foam-born,
 Uplifting out of the waves

A subtler grace than their own.
 Now a line is rowed to the wharf,
 The capstan clinks, and ere long
 The ship, alongside the wharf
 Discharges its holiday load.

Ay me! what fate is in store
 For the ship that is born today?
 What far sea-paths shall it tread,
 What fury of waves and wind,
 What dangers of reef and crag
 Of icebergs veiled in their fog,
 Of shoal and current and calm,
 What rage of sun shall it know,
 What blinding assault of cold?
 Shall it traverse the ocean ways
 Long years for the weal of men,
 And at last lay its wearied form
 To rest in some tranquil creek,
 Or suddenly over its strength
 Shall fate no skill can ward
 Descend, and its days be done?
 But has not a fragment of wreck
 Buoyed sometimes a precious freight,
 And borne it safe to its goal?
 But thine be a happier fate,
 O new-born child of the sea!
 Sail thou with kindly trades,
 On open friendly seas,
 And many ladings and rich
 Bring safely home, and safe
 Thyself in thy beauty and grace!

THE DIAL OF THE AGES

THE dew of the summer night
 Are fragrant around my feet,
 But my eyes are turned to thee,
 O Vega, maiden star,
 O snowy pearl of the skies!
 Thousands of years ago,
 So many the spirit faints
 At the awful range of time —
 Four hundred men in rank,
 Hand-reaching, sire to son,
 Scarce bridge the monstrous gulf —

The youngest sees thee now
 Thy mighty circle sweep
 Through summer's midnight dome,
 Till under the winter snows,
 Thy kin in purity,
 Thou harborest for a space.
 But the eldest — if he saw —
 Beheld thee in the north,
 Enthroned, immovable,
 While all the glittering heavens,
 Round thee revolving, thee
 Adored as virgin queen.
 He too adored thy face,
 And hailed in thee the God,
 Changeless, of earthly change,
 If thee indeed he saw.
 But haply he saw thee not,
 Too close akin to the brute
 That ever his eye should mark
 Thy splendor, as yet unskilled
 To traverse the ocean ways
 And seek a pilot star,
 But finding his way on land
 By scent and lowly sight,
 Even as his fellow brutes.
 To such a one, I ween,
 Yet chill from the whelming ice,
 And yet adread at the crash
 Of the mammoth's trampling step,
 My grasp reaches back through the night.

But the awful dial still,
 Where eons count but hours,
 Gleams in the mystic north;
 And again thine hour shall come,
 Again shalt thou reign the queen
 Of the congregated stars;
 And *then* with what regard
 Shall man behold thy face?
 Even in this half-hour gone
 He has raised his brow from the sod,
 He has learned thee what thou art,
 No God, but a blazing sun,
 And the fuel of thy flame,
 The heart of thy mystery,
 His eye hath summed it all,
 Weighed and measured and proved,
 And found it nothing strange,

But one with the earthly clods
That give him footing and food.

But how shall he view thee *then*?
Shall his spirit then have annulled
The abysmal depths of space,
And exult in converse high
With the splendid spirits that joy
Unbodied, unrestrained,
In the light of thy glowing orb?
Lord of life and of death,
Freed from stains of the brute,
As far from us as we
From the slant brow sunk to the dust, —
Art thou real and yet to be,
Or only the dream of an age
That is now at its highest crest
And can only retreat or decline?
Shall the brute again win sway,
And back through hate and crime,
Through darkness hugged to his heart,
Shall man sink back and hide
In the hairy fell of the beast,
No longer the lord of life,
But, weak and slow, the prey
Of the beasts that his lordly sires
Hunted for food or sport?

No answer thou givest or canst;
But whatever the dial shall mark
For the doom or the godhood of man,
This I know, that, as sure
As the face of the heaven shall be changed,
New stars climb to our skies
And old stars disappear,
So shall the face of man
And the heart and the life of man
Be changed from what they are,
As the Soul which is the world,
Through the changes of the earth,
Through the birth and death of stars,
Yea, through the birth and death
Of Universes, fulfils
For itself and not for man
Its lone, eternal will.


MY MAPLE

MOIST and cool is thy shade,
My Maple, though all around
The cricket shrills in the heat,
And the landscape is wavy and blurred
Under August's fiery breath.
A child, I planted thy shoot,
Bringing it out of the woods;
With pride I watched it grow,
Till at last it o'ertopped my head
With its lithe and upright stem.
Then a playmate, to tease me, or sheer
In wantonness, heedlessness,
Or moved by a sudden whim,
Drawing his pocket knife,
Cut thee down to thy root,
And ran off waving thy stem,
The plaything of an hour.
Had the stone I threw in my rage
Found the mark I meant,
His cries would have changed their tune.
But, rooted in strong, deep soil,
Thy life was hardly checked,
And soon thy tuft of green
Was waving again o'er my head.

Slower my growth than thine;
Yet I had attained my height
When full on thy leafy crown
Fell the awful September gale.
Thy leaves were torn in shreds
And flung afar on the wind.
But thou wert safe, I deemed.
Next morn a third of thy strength,
A mighty limb, lay prone,
And a white gash rent thy side.
But the life within thy veins
Leaped with the pulse of spring,
And ere long thy wound was healed.
Then we saw that thy grace
Had been heightened by the loss,
As thy crown, at April's touch,
To a perfect oval filled.
But that was years ago,
And now thou o'ertoppest the walls
That sheltered thee once from the north;
And thy crest, as the breezes play,

Lifts now to the sea's blue rim,
 And now to the far blue hills,
 The ancient home of thy kin.
 So wilt thou mount and expand
 When me and all of my age
 Thou seest no more in thy sweep.
 And, it may be, the hundredth year
 Shall find thee towering aloft
 When we have long been dust.
 So let me lie at rest,
 My only monument thou,
 No stone to bear my name
 Until it is only a name!
 But wave thou over my head,
 The grace of thy slender limbs
 Etched on the wintry dawn,
 Thy emerald dome a bower
 Of melody, June by June,
 And thyself a funeral pyre
 For a god each Fall renewed,
 While the hand that gave thee place
 Has long been mingled with dust,
 And the dust to beauty has climbed
 In stem and bud and leaf,
 To a life that is one with thine,
 O Maple, thou joyous child
 Of the love of Earth and the Sky!

TO A LITTLE GIRL

 UR of a million stars
 Our spirits chose this earth
 To be their home in time;
 And out of a million souls,
 All designed for love,
 Our souls choose here and there
 One to make all their own.
 What such a springing vine,
 Radiant with budding bloom,
 As thou, should find to choose
 In a shattered trunk like me,
 I shall not trouble to guess,
 Too glad to be thy choice.

O summer dawn, far flown
 To gladden a wintry eve,
 Sweet child, I have grown too wise

To ask how long thy love,
 Like fragrance outpoured, and glad
 In outpouring, shall be content
 To waste its treasure on me.
 Thou art untaught to live
 Beyond the present, and I
 Will unlearn my dangerous wont
 To question the future, and leave
 Sweet love in its golden hour
 Assured of eternity.
 So, dear, give me thy hand,
 And, while we stroll through the fields,
 With the eyes of a thousand flowers
 Upturned for approval and thanks.
 For their beauty and fragrance wrought,
 We twain will shape earth anew,
 And people it for ourselves
 With creatures after our heart, —
 Fairies, giants, dwarfs,
 Elves, hobgoblins, gnomes,
 Brave knights and ladies fair,
 Castles, enchanted woods, —
 And all that happens, compel
 To happen the way we want,
 And just in the nick of time;
 And, above all, every heart,
 Though after long toil and pain,
 Shall be sure to find its own.
 We will leave the roses their thorns,
 But will make their fragrance the more.
 We will leave the sour that the sweet
 May be better tasted and prized.
 Indeed, we will leave the world
 Much as it is, will we not?
 If only we two may walk
 Forever, hand in hand,
 Through this daisy-sprinkled field.

Yes, dear, I believe the world
 And all that is in it were made
 For fairies, and surely not
 The fairies for the world.
 I for one am glad
 They let me live in their world,
 Even if they play me the trick
 Of keeping out of sight,
 And laughing behind my back.
 It is much more charming so

Than it would be to live in a world
 Grown-up, where no fairies were.
 I had rather have for a friend
 A fairy than a king;
 Because, whom the fairies love
 Children love too, and though
 They may grow old in years,
 They never grow old at heart,
 But are children unto the end.
 Their foreheads never lose
 The brightness from heaven brought,
 But below on the earth they live
 Somehow in heaven still;
 And when they leave the earth,
 'Tis no more than the melting of mist
 In the sunbeams; it all is there,
 But has only passed from our sight.
 So, whatever the years may bring
 Of beauty or grace or power,
 Remember to keep firm grasp
 On the unseen fairy gold.
 Will it always bring happiness?
 Better than happiness, love!

THE RETURN OF THE ARTIST

HIS father and mother we knew,
 His brothers and sisters are here,
 Our playmates once and now
 Our neighbors; we know them all,
 But him, if once we knew,
 We know no more; he has passed
 Out of our narrow sphere,
 And returns to it stranger far
 Than the wanderer summer brings.
 Yet he is strange, not strange
 The soul of the work of his hands.
 That soul is the soul of us all,
 Of our lives, our works and days,
 The soul of our weakness and strength,
 And the inmost soul of our land
 And of all its fruits, whereof we
 Would fain be reckoned the crown.
 Must he needs pass out of our sphere,
 To see our life as it is?
 Must he needs fare oversea,
 Study in Paris and Rome,

View the art of the world
 In Europe's galleries hung,
 Learn to speak strange speech,
 Burn under Libyan suns,
 Freeze amid Tibetan snows
 On the rooftop of the world,
 To understand and depict
 The life of our little thorp?

Yet he never was truly of us,
 And how among us he came,
 This bird-of-Paradise
 Fledged in our Northern croft,
 A sheen of Tropic flame
 Amid our dusk and dun,
 We can only puzzle and guess.
 But stranger still he returns,
 With other habits and speech,
 With other thoughts and desires,
 Than of old were his and ours.
 Though he knows us to the core,
 We cannot know him; our life
 Is only a dot on the map
 Of the world his life has become.
 Yet, after all, he is ours.
 His mighty world has grown
 On a stem that here shot up.
 All he has seen and done
 He has seen and done as the child
 Of these vales that ope to the sea,
 These hills that, rounded and low,
 Remember how once, snow-crowned,
 They saw, not a shoal green sea,
 But the blue of the central deep.

I too am a child of these vales;
 And I have fared farther than he.
 I have held the world in my hand
 And have spurned it for dizzier flights
 Than ever Mercury dared.
 As he from our village passed,
 So I, from our village of earth,
 Have traversed the Universe,
 Yea! passed beyond its bounds
 To the Universe of Thought;
 Have there lived citizen;
 The speech of the dwellers there
 Have I learned, and, returning here,

I am more unknown than a stray
 From Afric or Indian wilds.
 Peace! Peace! we are children both,
 Trying to mirror God's world
 Each in a dusky flake
 Of mica chipped from the rock,
 Seeing each his tiny glimpse
 And fancying it the whole.
 When all the broken glints
 Of a myriad seers are joined,
 Perchance we shall see the whole; —
 But, haply the whole is more,
 In this Universe of Soul,
 Other and vastly more,
 Than the sum of all its parts,
 Their product, not their sum.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

So he has gone to his rest,
 My neighbor of many years,
 The lawyer, keen of mind,
 Sturdy of will and work,
 And strong of soul to bear
 The rudest buffets of fate.
 Far from fearing death,
 He hailed its coming with joy,
 For with all his heart he believed,
 With all his mind and might,
 That it came to lead him forth
 Where he should clasp again
 The darling child of his youth,
 And the wife of his youth and age.

Yet his buoyant faith was the fruit
 Of a cheap and barefaced fraud,
 Such as in mart or court
 He had been first to scoff, —
 Spirit photographs!
 A weak and silly trap
 For dull and ignorant minds,
 How caught it a mind like his?
 But, for once, he was off his guard,
 And his heart, enlisted, veiled
 The piercing eyes of his mind,
 And gave superstition rein
 To bear him whither it would;

So a mountebank's lie
 Bore him smiling to death.

Shall we say then, Blessed be fraud!
 No, and forever, no!
 Rather than trust false lights
 On life's uncharted sea,
 Where the mists forever shroud
 Its meeting with the Beyond,
 Give me — I ask no more —
 The true if scanty tale
 Which Reason's plummet tells,
 And the log of day to day; —
 Unless I may be of those,
 The blest, illuminate,
 Whose eyes, immortal of range,
 Pierce the sable of death
 Even as the azure of life.

THE RAILWAY ACCIDENT

UNDER my willow I sat,
 On an August afternoon,
 In the shade of its whispering orb,
 As a maple's round and dense.
 Far off in silver flashed
 The smoke of the coming train,
 That should thunder over its track
 Before me across the field.
 But my thought was away from earth,
 Out of space and time,
 Clenched with the thought of him,
 The God-intoxicate,
 Who taught that the will of man
 Its only freedom finds
 In obedience to the law
 Of its being, and has no power
 To stray outside its bounds.
 Not that when it goes right
 It obeys the law, and wrong
 When it disobeys; it moves —
 Here the roar of the train
 Brought back my thought to earth —
 Even as yonder train,
 On its track or not at all.

Was it a prescience of thought,
 A moment's outrunning of Time

In my soul, or only chance?
 For scarce had I pictured the shock
 Of the train derailed, when a thrill
 Shot through its lithe, swift length,
 A grinding crash smote my ears,
 One car staggered out of the line
 And sank aslant in the sand;
 Then all the mighty mass
 Shuddering, stopped awry.
 Out of the hush, rose a groan,
 Then screams, and forth from the cars
 Came pouring their human freight.
 With what poor speed I might,
 I hurried across the field
 To the scene that I feared was of death,
 Nor far astray was my fear;
 For stretched on the bloody grass,
 With a crushed and bleeding leg,
 Lay a brakeman, his ashen face
 Distorted with pain and dread.

The crowd made way for me,
 As to one who bore the mark
 Of the Brotherhood of Pain.
 I took the sufferer's hands,
 While a surgeon, by chance on the train,
 Wrought, with rough tools fetched
 From a farmer's work-bench, to save
 The life that was fleeting fast;
 Wrought without drugs to still
 The torture of knife and saw.
 At last the torment ceased,
 And then it was mine to do
 What word and touch might avail
 To make the spirit supply
 The body's lack of strength.
 So it endured for an hour,
 While the passengers made a purse
 For the sufferer, be it for him
 Or only for wife and child.
 Then they lounged impatient about
 Till another train should be sent.
 At last it came, and my charge
 I resigned with many fears,
 That were founded only too well,
 For ere he had reached the town
 And the arms of help and love,
 He died.

And so the flower
 Which had struck its roots into earth
 Suddenly burst into bloom
 In the life beyond, and sloughed
 The stem by which alone
 It was known to our earthly sense.
 But sometimes it seems to me,
 Who have been uprooted so far
 That I feel I draw less from earth
 Than from ether, it seems to me
 That the life around and above
 Overflowing into our lives
 Is more to us, hourly more,
 Although unrecognized,
 Than this of brawn and health,
 Which boasts its scantiness
 The universal whole.

THE IMMIGRANT'S FUNERAL

THAT he ever wandered here
 From the pale skies of the North,
 From his ruddy Gothland kin,
 Whose speech so clung to his lips,
 With its music of forest bells,
 That they took but haltingly ours, —
 That he ever came among us,
 English in name and speech,
 In habit and prejudice,
 As in any Midland thorp,
 Here in our unknown town
 On the granite coast of Maine, —
 'Twas not the quest of gold,
 Nor the Northman's quest of the sun,
 But the quest of learning. So here,
 A student in our schools,
 Albeit older than most,
 A laborer in our fields.
 He wrought, and won our regard,
 'Till his speech and ways began
 To blend and be lost in ours.

But one fact he reckoned without,
 One danger had not foreseen.
 He had come from a colder air;
 And something in our own,
 Bred by our lustier sun,

Sapped the rugged strength
 He had drawn from Berserk sires.
 We scarce had missed him from school,
 When we learned with a shock of pain
 That death already had set
 Its mark on his cheek and brow.
 The little that friendship might
 It wrought with eager haste,
 But all in vain; and now
 A few short weeks have brought
 This tolling of the bell
 This gathering of young and old
 To the Immigrant's funeral.

Of all illusions on earth,
 The strangest is after fame.
 The charm of living fame
 Is easy to understand;
 'Tis a man leaning over a pool
 Seeing his face in its depths.
 But the thought of fame after death,
 To one who has missed it in life,
 Is to lean o'er a muddy pool
 And think: It is roily now,
 But, when I am gone and it clears,
 Those who come after shall see
 The face it ought now to reflect.
 The image to him who has gone,
 Even though it were, is not;
 And, if by a miracle
 It abides, the wonder is ours,
 Not his who has passed away,
 And cannot know it abides.

Yet, if memory have a worth,
 How many toil life-long
 To win it, and gain far less
 Than this wanderer did by chance!
 Because he came from afar,
 Because he was not like us,
 Because untimely he died,
 We therefore remember him;
 And three-score years from now
 Grey-haired ancients will point
 To the hollow that marks his grave,
 And say, I knew him in life,
 And tell his story afresh.
 What more do conquerors gain?

To me appeals not fame,
 Living or after death.
 Fame is only for them
 Who live in time. As for me,
 Alive in eternity,
 The heaven that spans life's pool,
 I need no reflex of time, —
 No more than he needs now,
 For whom the church bells toll —
 To teach me that I live.

THE FULFILMENT

WHEN in the frosty breath
 Of the interstellar abyss
 A swirl began to form,
 Outspake the soul of the world
 To the soul of the universe:
 Is this my life foretold,
 Is this the Fulfilment to be?
 But the other answered: Wait!
 The beginning only is this.
 When the whirling had advanced
 Till the whole as one huge disc
 On its cloudy axle swung,
 Again the question came,
 And again the answer: Wait!
 Then slowly the center shrank,
 Leaving a slender rim,
 And again it shrank, and again,
 Till the mass revolved, not as one,
 But in rings of cloud and void.
 Then out of the center came
 A wonder which was Light,
 And the radiance touched the rings
 Each with its dawning hue.
 Then the world-soul cried: At last
 The Fulfilment is at hand.
 But the greater said: Not so!
 Then, one after one, the rings,
 Breaking, rolled into orbs,
 That round the central light,
 Where once the rings had whirled,
 Wheeled in their circling dance,
 Each with its flamelet crowned.
 Then the world-soul cried: Enough!
 My being is sated and thrilled.

But the universal soul,
 Smiling, answered: Wait!
 Then shrank the central orb,
 And the circling cressets paled.
 The world-soul gazed with rue,
 But the other bade it look
 On the third of the lesser orbs.
 Already its light was gone,
 And forever half in night
 It roll'd through the central glow.
 But, lo! from pole to pole,
 It was bathed in a silver flood,
 It was mantled with living green.
 Then the soul of the world rejoiced
 And cried: I see; 'twas for this,
 The crown of their long desire,
 That out of the primal mist
 The circling orbs were whirled.
 But the other answered: Wait!
 Then above the green outflashed
 Wings of a myriad dyes,
 And above their splendor, song.
 Cried the world-soul: This is the end!
 But the greater answered: Look!
 Then mighty strengths appeared,
 Lording with bulk and brawn
 O'er earth and sea and sky.
 Then upon either pole
 Fell a touch from the hand of frost,
 And it widened and sunward spread,
 The verdurous mantle shrank,
 And shrank the mighty strengths.
 Then the world-soul cried: Alas!
 The end even now begins,
 And yet the Fulfilment waits.
 But its leader answered: Hark!
 And up from the forest's depths,
 From arms of weakness arose
 Out of lips of weakness a cry.
 And the soul of the universe
 To the wondering world-soul spake:
 Lo! the Fulfilment is here.

LIFE'S HERO

WHO is Life's hero? He
 Who braves the cataract's whirl
 At the call of weakness for help,
 Who treads the haunts of the pest,
 Who toils over arctic ice,
 Who breasts an unknown sea,
 Its demons, its gulfs of death,
 Who faces taunt and slight
 For the sake of a noble cause, —
 Heroes all, who make Earth
 The better that they have dared.

But a greater hero I know.
 'Tis he, who rending away
 All tendrils of faith and trust,
 Fears not to set himself
 Against God's universe,
 To eye it, question it,
 Test its heart by its deeds,
 And finally decide
 If it be worthy or not
 For him to trust and love.
 This is the greatest feat,
 So great that its doer becomes
 An antitheos, the man
 Alone of all mankind
 Whose love or hate can be
 Worthy of God's regard.

No such hero am I.
 If ever I could have been once,
 I have lost forever the power,
 Nor now regret the loss.
 Mine is too deep a sense
 Of the universal good
 That I can impartially judge
 Betwixt his maker and man.
 So much God's man am I
 That if I knew his good
 Involved my ill, as indeed,
 I believe it may, I should feel
 That still it was better so,
 Better even for me,
 As having a larger share
 In God than in myself.

THE CHARIOT OF DEATH

STILL, though the heart accepts,
 The mind refuses to bow.
 To see as well as to feel
 It demands; and, if all is well
 In the universe of God,
 Then let the good stand forth
 Solid and firm, and the ill
 Be clearly revealed its shade,
 Devoid of substance and strength.
 But, look! the mind exclaims,
 Whose is the chariot
 That scours forever the earth,
 Whose are the trampling steeds,
 The grinding wheels, and the scythes
 From the axles cruelly curved,
 Whose, indeed, but Death's?
 He it is wields the lash,
 And he it is who laughs
 At the terror that runs before
 And the devastation behind.
 The world is belted and bound
 By his bloody tracks; itself
 Is but his playground and park,
 Its children merely his prey.

But whom bears Death behind?
 Cries the heart. Behold, and say
 Who sits in the chariot aloft
 And gives the word of command?
 You call it the chariot of Death,
 But only the driver is he,
 The servant, the slave, the tool,
 Of him whose own it is,
 And he is — Progress. The earth
 Is another and nobler earth
 Wherever his wheels have crushed,
 Wherever his scythes have mown,
 And ever out of his track
 Rises a grander life;
 So that the course of Death
 Appears his punishment
 And not his triumph. The fruit
 Is his who masters death;
 And he gathers it for the weal
 Not of Death but of Life.
 Yea, but, the mind responds,

Why should not Life himself
 Be his own charioteer?
 Why slay that Life may prevail?
 Why sin that good may be born?

But seest thou not, says the heart,
 Seest thou not that Death
 Has power but over his kind?
 It is only death that he slays;
 He holds no power over life.
 It is only the death amid life
 That he can take to himself,
 And again and yet again
 The lesser death that remains.
 Over life he has no power.
 And when at last he has slain
 All that belongs to death
 By primal heritage
 From chaos and ancient night,
 Whence life and light were born,
 Then shall he slay himself,
 And Progress, reaching its goal,
 Shall mount its eternal throne
 And sit revealed as God.

GOD'S LAMPLIGHTERS OF SOULS

SOMETIMES in my weakness I think —
 Be it the ebb's last wave
 Or the first of returning strength —
 That I have in myself the power
 To create, myself to dart
 Wingèd words that shall blaze
 From their very speed, nor flame
 A barren wonder and show,
 But, kindling the hearts of men,
 Shall age to age transmit
 The fire that burns in my heart, —
 To be poet, to be in God's world
 His lamplighter of souls.
 Then my sober sense returns,
 And I know that I mistook
 For the poet's God-given fire
 Some poet's enkindling touch.

No, let me be content
 With the happier, humbler lot

Of tending the sacred fire,
 Of making it live in my heart,
 Of raying its vital warmth.
 Unto some God gives the power
 To create, unto some to enjoy;
 Unto those the grander doom,
 Unto these the more enviable.
 So let me be content —
 Rather let me rejoice —
 That his love bestowed on me,
 Not the gift to copy his work,
 But to see it and find it good;
 Not to rival the copyists,
 But to see and applaud their work,
 And rejoice in their gift divine.

Through all the portals of sense
 Troop the heralds of God's grace;
 Not mine to bring their report;
 'Tis enough for me to stand by
 And applaud the message brought.
 For a single herald can serve
 Hundreds of listeners;
 And when the heralds are sent,
 The heralds with signet and wand,
 Other our services are,
 Each his own, and all
 In God's true-seeing eye,
 Equal in honor and worth.

THE DEATH AND BIRTH OF A GOD


THE death and birth of an age
 Are the death and birth of a God.
 The generations of men,
 Like the generations of leaves,
 Follow each upon each,
 Seemingly without end.
 But at last the tree itself
 Falls, and the leaves that toss
 Are burgeon of other boughs.
 So the generations of men
 Follow so long in line
 That the memory of none
 Goes backward to the time

When any faith was held,
 Any God was adored,
 Save only those whereof each
 Has learned at his mother's knee.

But behind all trees and Gods
 Are working growth and decay;
 And a generation comes
 Which in its own time sees
 The passing of its God,
 The advent of a new.
 Then life, which had lost its hope,
 And bitter and brackish had grown
 In the shrinking of its tide,
 That grey and sad had become
 In the twilight of its faith,
 Suddenly flushes with hope,
 Dawns into youth, and swells
 Full-flooded with sweetness and strength.
 Or, it may be, between the death
 Of the old God and birth of the new,
 A generation or more
 Must pass in the Night of the Gods.
 It never knew the old,
 Or only as memory,
 Never as living force;
 And it cannot foresee the new,
 Nor know if the new shall be.

That generation is mine,
 A barren rock between
 Two flowering meadows, a hush,
 Deathlike and dread, between
 Two bursts of jubilant song.
 But at least the grievous time
 Holds a reward for those
 Whose hearts in silence feel
 The steps of the coming God
 Before from his viewless cloud
 He bodies himself to men.
 Yea, great is their reward
 Whose faith has vanquished night,
 Who, meeting amid the gloom,
 With sacred joy confer,
 And gaze together aloft,
 Wondering in what guise
 And when their God shall appear.

DRAGGING THE POND

 NE autumn afternoon
Through the village a rumor ran —
A whisper at first and at last
An uproar — that Imogen,
The loveliest of our girls,
Sweetest and fairest of all,
Shrinking, yet quick of mind,
The soul of purity,
Had drowned herself in the pond.
There seemed no question of chance,
For her steps led down to the brink,
Her hat was tied to a bough,
And on it was pinned: Good-bye!
Forget me; you cannot forgive.
Imogen.


On the shore
Her mother paced up and down,
Stretching her hands to the pond,
Demanding back her child,
And calling on us for help.
Hope we felt there was not;
But, to do what could be done,
What must be done before
The mother's cry could be stilled,
Four of us took a boat,
Two to row and one
To manage the dreadful drag,
While my part was to steer.

It was early evening now.
The light of the moon fell slant
On the emptiness of the pond,
But it gave us light enough,
More than enough for our fears.
For an hour and another hour
We toiled; the moon went down,
And the flash of our oars gleamed white
As the face we feared to see.
At every halt of the drag
On rock or sunken log,
Our hearts within stood still.
Then a call came out of the dark:
Come ashore; she is found.

Found! but alive or dead?
We questioned, soon to know.

They told us that Imogen
Had been seen that afternoon,
In the next town, taking the train
For the city; with her went
A salesman but too well known,
Glib and persuasive of tongue,
Showily dressed, polite,
Attentive to women, and masked
With a semblance of chivalry,
To which his words before men
Gave doubly damned the lie.
Her father already had gone
To catch the flying express
In anxious pursuit; for him
There was something to do; but, at home,
The mother sat in her chair,
Older by many years,
Swaying forward and back
And moaning: Had she but died!
Would God she lay dead at my feet!

THE ROMAN FLAMEN

 OME said he was marked from birth
For the flamen's holy task,
Such reverence for sacred things
He ever showed, such bent
For brooding on human life,
On death and what follows death,
And the meaning and purpose of all.
Others, the worldings, said,
Between a sneer and a sigh:
Not so! It is plain to see
He is not of us, but as plain
He is also not of you.
He is too earnest, and rates
Life at too great a worth
Either to throw it away
Or to barter it with the Gods
For a better life to come.
He thinks in his innocence
To be flamen means to have scope
To work out his heart's desire
In the welfare of other men.
He is bound to make the attempt;
The outcome will be what it shall.

So he took up his task
 And wrought. Ten years he toiled,
 Giving daily his life for men,
 And questioning not the lore
 That he took and taught for the truth.
 Then a light appeared in the east,
 And a rumor ran through the world
 Of the Crucified, who had risen
 From death into deathless life,
 Proclaiming salvation to men
 From death and the fear of death
 By living as He had lived,
 One with the God over all,
 Whom He taught men to name
 Our Father.

Most men scoffed,
 Or laughed at the whole as a jest.
 But the reverent called on the law
 To stamp out the blasphemy,
 The reverent, led by their priests,
 All but the flamen, who, lost
 To reverence, reason, and grace,
 Dared to proclaim: Whom we
 Under various forms and names
 Have worshipped as the divine,
 Behold this day revealed!
 Yea, at the altar he stood
 And published this heresy.
 Did any believe him? Not one.
 They tore off his flamen's robe
 And drove him with sticks and stones
 From the altar he had profaned.
 In vain he sought to return,
 Pleading, defending; in vain
 He showed the fruits of his life
 And the fruits of his fellows' lives,
 Justice, temperance, love;
 The world would have none of him.

Then his mind began to give way —
 The judgment of Jove, men said —
 Speech failed his lips of fire
 And the thought behind the speech.
 Babbling at last, like a child,
 He was led away from men's sight,
 And he died already forgot

By those who had known his prime.
 But the misbelieving few
 Remembered him; and now,
 After two thousand years,
 He is worshipped as a saint,
 With a day in the calendar,
 And the children of those who scoffed
 Are proud to bear his name.

What are the words I have said?
 No Roman flamen was he —
 No flamen wrought ever so,
 Bore such a burden of souls —
 But the friend of my youth, and he died
 Only today. The rest
 Is true, or will be true.

STRONGER THAN LIFE

Dou do not love this child,
 This little innocent,
 Uplifting to your face
 Her mother's very eyes?
 No! for she stole away
 My Anna from me. No!
 Let me never see her again!

A purblind god is Love,
 Or lazy, or mischievous;
 At least, among all the pairs
 That he mates on earth, how few
 Image the perfect love!
 But in George and Anna we saw,
 With a glow at the heart, that Love
 Had here wrought his perfect work.
 Not merely for them but for us
 The old world was new-born.
 When we saw them side by side
 Earth seemed no longer a place
 For hate and wrong and sin,
 Failure and tears, but a place
 Where the rational, natural
 Business of every one
 Was to love and be loved in turn.

It was good to be living then;
 And one who thought could see
 That it mattered not so much
 On whom the blessing fell
 As that it fell, for its glow
 Was diffused on all around.
 By and by their joy
 Gave promise that ere long
 It should receive its crown.
 Then, while we waited all
 In glad expectance, there fell
 The dreadful news that the life
 Born of their love had come
 At the cost of the mother's life.
 So, when they showed him his child,
 Thinking the silent plea
 Of its beauty and helplessness
 Might win his heart from its grief,
 He turned away and refused
 Ever to see it more.

Time, which heals all griefs,
 Will heal even his, we said,
 But idly, not knowing him.
 One October afternoon,
 When out of frost and fire
 Flamed beauty by summer unguessed,
 He went with a friend to hunt,
 A friend who hoped that the air
 And the sport might change his mood.
 But the friend returned alone,
 To tell the terrible tale
 Of the accident that had slain
 His companion. Then we knew,
 Though we spoke it with bated breath,
 That his love had been stronger than life,
 And, when on a sudden he saw
 A portal ready to ope
 Into the world beyond
 Whither his Anna had passed,
 He had dashed it open wide.

This tale of love, when the woods,
 Under October's gold,
 Are red with the blood of the year,
 Is the tale they tell to me.

DAWN OR DUSK?

UNDER a cold grey light
 Our shivering instant we flit,
 Poor motes! and then are gone.
 Not long enough we abide
 To be sure of the low-hung gleam
 Whether it waxes or wanes,
 Is herald of dawn or of dusk.
 Could we compare the light
 That our farthest sires beheld
 With the seeming-changeless glow
 That is light of the world we share,
 Could we compare them and see
 Which is more and which less,
 We might be sure, but, alas!
 We cannot see with their eyes,
 And the witness they bear is twain.
 Oh! were there only an art
 To tell the east from the west!
 But we know not whither we face,
 Toward the east of a dawn delayed,
 Toward the west of gathering dark.
 Heaven grants us no sign,
 And Earth, if it hearken, is dumb.

Say not that it matters not,
 So short is our moment of life,
 Whether the coming change
 Be toward the day or the night,
 That only our far-off sons
 And not ourselves it concerns.
 Can it be to us little care
 If we are children of light
 Or of darkness; whether our world
 Lies in the hollowed hand
 Of the Lord of Life or of Death;
 That the being we transmit
 Is a glorious heritage,
 Or only a loss and reproach?
 But, of one thing I am sure,
 If our Lord be the Lord of Life,
 He would never have set us a task,
 Given us a problem to solve,
 Beyond our powers; and my faith
 Tells me that someone some day
 Shall discover a mystic power
 Hiding in veins of the earth,

That shall tell us east from west,
 And settle once for all
 Whether we face the dawn
 As far-off ancestors
 Of the glorious children of Day,
 Or whether, nearing the end
 Of a dying race, we leave
 To our children less and less
 Of living light and warmth,—
 And God is not in his world,
 Or has left it, and in his place
 The power that is all He is not,
 The principle that destroys
 Even now is ascending His throne.

But a whisper has come to me
 That even so we can choose,
 And even in the Devil's world
 Need not be the Devil's men.
 That ours is the wondrous lot,
 The startling privilege,
 To be, in a world of doubt,
 Or a world of evil confessed,
 By our own triumphant choice
 The children of God. And so,
 Though it matters whether our light
 Be of the dawn or the dusk,
 Its import is not supreme.
 Yea, greater worth may we win
 Who choose in the blindness of doubt
 That, whether the world we see
 Be of the Light or the Dark,
 We are the children of Light,
 On whom the Dark has no power,
 For whom the Night is as Day.

DREAMS OF STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

EVER since that morn when I woke,
 Twenty long years ago,
 To weakness, powerlessness,
 My waking self has known
 But all too well its plight.
 Not so my slumbering self,
 The doer of my dreams.
 That self is always strong,
 And seems to take delight,

More than in years of health,
 In deeds of daring and toil.

Again o'er winter snows,
 A dozen glowing miles,
 O'er wooded hills, down dales,
 I chase the crafty fox;
 Or over the starlit ice,
 On ringing skates I fly,
 Outspeeding all my mates,
 Leaving woods and hills behind,
 All but the following stars;
 Or at sea in a fishing smack,
 Mid the equinoctial's roar,
 I grasp the tiller alone,
 While the waves are torn to smoke;
 Or on the playground again
 I drive the whirling ball
 Far over the fielders' heads,
 And speed round the bases home.

Such were my dreams for years;
 But now they have changed their type.
 I now strain other powers
 In that twilight world of sleep.
 'Tis the mind I am using now,
 The voice before questioning crowds,
 The pen, for a million to read.
 I, who can hardly stand,
 Am grappling with the world,
 Hammering the stubborn thought
 On the anvil of the mind;
 And all in the eyes of men,
 And finding it nothing strange.
 Here is a problem to solve:
 Why should my slumbering self
 Suddenly take this turn?
 Is it self-assertion of powers,
 That are robbed of their rightful scope,
 In the one world where they can act?
 Or can it be prophecy
 Of deeds I am yet to do?

O veriest dream of all!
 Dreams are true but in dreams.
 O Philoctetes, here
 Our fates part company;
 Thine to take up thy life

Even where it was broken off,
 And carry it high and far
 Into fields of glorious deeds,
 Into honors and rich rewards,
 More than thy youth foresaw.
 But of thee the world had need,
 Sole hope of thy land wert thou.
 Yea, Heaven itself stooped down,
 And healed thee by miracle
 To do thine only work.
 O Philoctetes, thy years
 Of weakness were only ten;
 Mine have been twenty. Ah! me,
 Long since parted our fates!

LOVE'S EXILE

THE ground I thought so firm
 Has crumbled beneath my feet,
 And now I no longer go
 With face upturned to the sky,
 Communing with sun and stars,
 But threading hollow ways,
 Underground, sunless, dark,
 And lighted only by pale
 Phosphoric gleams, which flit,
 Aimless, lost, as I.

For at last I know my life
 Robbed of life's chief prize,
 Its consummation and crown.
 No love of one for all,
 No love for truth or right
 Or beauty can ever fill
 The place of the love for one
 And the love by one returned.
 This my life has lost,
 Be it by fate or fault.
 O little mother, who died
 In my boyhood, but thrice my age,
 And younger than I am now,
 In thy life was no room for thought,
 But only for love and its deeds.
 How richer far than mine
 Was thy life in its scanty span!
 While I have been grasping at stars

Through my fingers have slipped unmarked
 The golden sands of love.

Had I not been born for love,
 I had never felt my loss.
 My cup had stood full-brimmed,
 Being shallow; Love could not have poured,
 Because there had been no room.
 But my cup is still at ebb,
 And Love has passed me by.
 Whatever other worlds
 May bestow, of this be sure,
 They never can give what I miss,
 Earthly love on this earth.
 What can I do? — Endure!
 It is nothing, I know, but at least
 It is not to yield, not to play
 A coward's part in the face
 Of the myriads whose doom I share.
 I can endure to the end, —
 For not so long will it be —
 Wondering at my doom,
 And wondering if the law
 Of eternal balance can reach
 So deep into human fate,
 As, here or anywhere,
 To a heart that for love was born,
 To make good the loss of love.

So, in these underground ways,
 Because it is I who grope
 And not my fellows alone,
 My faith has shrunk to an If!
 But time, at least give me time!
 Or must eternity join
 In solving a riddle like this?

WADING UNDER THE BRIDGE

LAST night renewed the dream
 That I had long years ago
 When I sank in the clutch of the frost,
 A-swoon on the wintry shore.
 Was it because in the day
 I had wandered down to the bridge,
 And peered through the chilly bore
 I had traversed in daring and dread

As a boy, and traversed again
 In the icy dream of my swoon?
 But this was the dream that returned,
 Only with newer forms
 And voices at its close.

I was coming home from school,
 A child with books and slate;
 When I came in sight of the bridge
 I remembered the morning's taunt
 That I durst not wade its length,
 Under the granite vault
 And the vast embankment above,
 O'er which went thundering the trains.
 Barefoot and scantily clad,
 For this was in summer's heat,
 I was ready on my resolve
 To dare the grisly attempt.
 Into the stream I stepped,
 Where it entered the shadowy arch;
 The chill of the wave and the air
 Smote on me both at once.
 Far ahead I saw,
 Beyond the dark and the chill,
 A narrow ring of light,
 My dared and distant goal.
 The walls were oozy-wet;
 Here and there from the roof
 Blunt, white stalactites hung,
 Ghostly, corpse-like things,
 That made me shudder and look
 To see if my exit were free,
 As if the vault were a tomb.
 How the chill of the shallow stream
 I was wading mid-leg deep
 Shot upward to my heart!
 I stole a backward glance:
 The openings were equal now;
 I was half-way through the bore.
 Larger and brighter grew
 The welcome arch in front;
 And into the hollow roar
 Of winds and waves in the vault,
 Which seemed to my childish sense
 To be gathered about my head,
 There came the sweeter sound
 Of laughter and merry shouts,
 Which grew with the growing arch,

With the brightening of the vault.
 At last from under the stones
 I stepped, with a gasp of relief,
 Into the golden sun —
 Was it ever so golden before? —
 Under the infinite dome
 Of the sapphire summer sky,
 And before me on the bank
 My playmates, a joyous band,
 Were gathered; but only those —
 Yet it seemed to me not strange —
 Who earlier or later had passed
 Out of life and mortal ken.
 How many tears they had cost!
 How foolish had been the tears!
 For were they not all alive,
 And running to greet me now?
 Then as I sought the shore,
 I saw beyond them a group
 Of their elders; among them one
 Was hastening to meet me; her face,
 A beaming splendor of love, —
 My mother's! Forward I sprang
 To meet her; but a voice
 Cried: It is not yet time!
 And I felt myself caught in the grasp
 Of a mighty hand; and then
 I was back on the other side,
 And, still compelled by the hand,
 I bent for my books and slate, —
 And I woke.

Is it not yet time?
 Is there something for me to do,
 Which has waited all these years?
 Of all the heart's restraints
 What is so hard to bear
 As the baffling veil that hides
 To-morrow from to-day?

IN THE HOSPITAL

A GAIN within these walls,
 Whereout I passed aglow,
 New-born to the life of Mind!
 Long ago in years,
 That hour was ages ago
 In thronging harvests of thought.

But a few short months at the most,
 I said, and the fiery flame
 Of the lamp of my thought will consume
 The wreck that upbears its glow.
 I had never dreamed to outlive
 My delight in the gains of thought,
 Nor indeed that it could be outlived.
 Nor had I outlived it, but found
 That it sated not all my soul,
 That behind it upgrew a will
 Hungering and struggling to do,
 A will that, caged and bound
 In weakness, I could not appease,
 A will that was also to love,
 Which darkened my sky till the cloud
 That should have watered life's field
 Seemed ready in ruin to burst.
 It wrung from my lips the cry:
 This golden fruit of Thought
 They gave me to balance my loss,
 Is only an empty rind!
 Why not throw all away,
 Life and Thought and Pain,
 And take your chance with the Void,
 Rather than live bemocked
 By thought and impotence?
 Was I in my world of Mind
 Doomed after all to live
 Cut off from life's chief end,
 Which thousands of years ago
 The Stoic slave declared
 To be, not the loftiest Thought,
 But Action, and severed no less
 From life's supremest joy,
 Which also can never be Thought,
 But only Love? Be it so;
 At least let me face the truth!

So my inward strife
 Endured for weeks and months,
 And still my insurgent will
 Grew more imperious,
 And more rebellious my heart.
 Then, like a star out of noon,
 Came a word from beyond the years
 Of my knowledge and my pain.
 'Twas my great Physician who wrote:
 When I gave you back to life,

I had no power to bestow
 Strength with the life restored;
 Power unto life was mine,
 Not unto vigor and health.
 But now, so much has man
 Wrested from Nature's grasp,
 That I dare believe my art
 Sufficient to give you at last
 The strength you have missed so long.
 But, should I fail, the risk
 Is not your present life
 With its measureless riches of thought,
 But death even under the knife.
 The chances are even; be yours
 The choice, be mine the attempt!
 Choice! My will upleaped
 To embrace the danger; and now
 I am lying on this bed,
 And a few short hours will tell
 If this be all and the end,
 Or life begins here anew.

I had never dreamed that the sight
 Of the city could be so fair
 As it sparkled and shifted and shone,
 When yesternorn my eyes,
 From the stately steamer's deck,
 Sought almost in vain
 To discover the old I had known
 Under the mountainous new.
 My heart leaped up with a thrill,
 As the city's empire unrolled,
 That I might bear a part
 In the giant tasks of its toil!
 Then I thought of the knife, and a chill
 Caught at my heart, but I said:
 One chance in two is mine
 For a part in that glorious life.
 Welcome the risk!

But now,
 When Fate seemed even of hand,
 Came a trial unforeseen.
 I had just renewed in mind
 My welcome of the risk,
 When a glow flashed through my heart,
 Which I deemed forgotten of love,
 And a voice above me said:

Is there aught I can do for you?
 I looked, as one caught in the sweep
 Of an avalanche, might look
 On a hidden treasure laid bare.
 Even as I raised my eyes
 A sweet new trouble dawned
 In the eyes that bent over mine;
 I answered: Only this, —
 Come tomorrow and ask
 If I am alive or dead.
 Then I turned my face to the wall;
 And strange tears burnt my lids.

NEW-BORN

BACK again in life,
 Which long ago I resigned;
 New-born at forty years,
 Rich in experience
 Of thought and suffering,
 The lore of the ages mine,
 And the world outspread at my feet,
 Its paths all open now,
 But none can I ever tread
 With the care-free step of youth.
 Yet, since from me through pain
 Age took the years that were youth's
 Perchance in these latter years
 My youth shall find me again,
 A youth of soberer pulse
 And steadier eye, but strong
 And fiery hearted to drive
 The plowshare of manhood's will
 Through the fallow fields of the world.

A way to the mouth of hell
 From heaven's very gate
 The dreamer saw long ago.
 But roads lead either way,
 And up from the mouth of hell
 It must lead to heaven's gate.
 Three roads a man may tread
 Either to heaven or hell, —
 Of Thought and Pain and Love.
 Happy is he whose face,
 When his feet on either are set,
 Is turned the upward way

That leads him toward the Divine.
 But why this lot I won,
 When another, who started with me,
 Worthier seeming than I,
 Followed the hellward path
 And is lost; that is to me
 Mystery of mysteries,

All three of the roads have been mine:
 From the crowded highway of Pain
 I passed to the sparely trod,
 Star-seeking trail of Thought,
 Which now on a sudden is crossed
 By the bowery, music-thranged,
 Level pathway of Love.
 I had no power to choose;
 Ere I knew it my way was changed;
 And now I wonder if Thought
 In another twenty years
 Had brought me so near the Divine
 As Love in a single hour.
 One thing I cannot tell, —
 If the way of Love to the end
 Shall be mine, or again I must tread
 Alone the summits of Thought,
 And alone I must finish my course
 Mid the awful silences
 Under the silent stars.
 So be it! but this I know,
 The very silence will ring
 With the music of the soul
 On this way of Love set free,
 Which never more shall be stilled
 In life or the sequel of life.

IN CENTRAL PARK

CAN it be possible
 That half a hundred years
 Have so transformed our life
 That Webster, though in bronze,
 Looms not a leader of men,
 A master of eloquence,
 But only as some vast shape,
 Half sunk in Egyptian sands,
 Majestic, sorrowful,

And haunted still by strange
 Memnonian melodies?
 This is our world, not his,
 Ours while we have the strength
 To make it ours, not ours
 To seal and stamp our own.
 Had it not been ever so,
 Today had been his, not ours,
 Nay, rather, the Puritan's,
 The cave man's, the primal ape's;
 For, save as the present dies
 In the act of becoming the past,
 Alone can the future be born.

So in the leafy park,
 In the fragrant summer eve,
 We walked, and so we talked —
 I talked — then she began:
 One thing I demand to know,
 Which you have never explained,
 Why, when you asked me to come
 Next day to inquire for you,
 And when I faithfully came,
 You coolly sent me away
 To come again in a week!
 Was that your gratitude?
 And don't you confess that it showed
 Forgiveness beyond your desert
 When I came at the end of the week?

Must I explain? I said.
 Yes, I will explain — for she shrank
 From something in my tone.
 Would you have undone all
 The good that you did? You came
 Like a messenger out of the life
 I was risking my life to find.
 You came as a part of that life,
 Sent as a pledge by fate,
 To comfort me and sustain
 When I entered the shadow of death;
 Or was fate, which had mocked me so oft,
 Mocking me unto the end?
 How should I know? The doubt
 Chilled like a foretaste of death.
 But, at last, ere the trial came,
 My spirit grappled the doubt,

And overcame it: I willed
 To live under ether and knife
 To win back my health, and win
 More than life and health.

I seized her hand, and urged,
 Do you understand me now?
 She veiled her starry eyes,
 But left her hands in mine.
 Had I let you stay that morn,
 I added, the step of Love
 Would have shattered the House of Life,
 And Love is of life not death.
 But now the walls are firm,
 The doors are open wide,
 Shall he not enter? I gazed,
 For the lips to curve into speech,
 For the long-lashed eyes to lift
 And look the answer I sought;
 When, lo! on the lids two tears
 Were welling into birth.
 Only this I recall, —
 Two kisses brushed them away,
 And on that evening no more
 We spoke of time and change;
 And the stars — I can see them still —
 For very gladness beamed,
 As soul in soul we passed
 Into the newer life.

PROTHALAMIUM

WHEN at last I sought my room
 On that fateful night of nights,
 Her kiss yet warm on my lips,
 I laughed and said: Come, Death,
 Whenever thou wilt, thou shalt find
 Thy battle already lost!
 Mine is the victory
 Over thee for evermore,
 Won through my champion, Love.
 I, who so long was held
 Aloof from the life of men,
 Seeing their loves and hates
 Dimly as in a glass,
 Helpless to lift a hand
 In their labors or their strife;

Or as one marooned on an isle
 Across a narrow strait,
 Foaming, not to be swum,
 Which bars him for evermore
 From the life that his fellows live,
 So I have lived apart,
 And, turning my face to the stars,
 Have sought the communion there
 That I missed on earth; but now
 Love has come down from their depths,
 And, bearing me on his wings,
 Has reunited my life
 To the living life of the world.
 The Eternal, unto whose thought
 I strove to uplift my own,
 And who gave me the answering sense
 Of mind attuned to mind
 Across the immensities,
 Hath answered no less the cry
 My heart upraised to the stars,
 And hath sent not merely the glow
 That entered into my heart,
 Speaking peace to my soul,
 But another life hath he sent
 To bring, yea, be unto me
 His breathing, living love.

Do you wonder I laughed at Death.
 The shadow, whose retreat
 Marks the progress of Life?
 For I am no longer one,
 But am bound with a living bond
 To the heart of the Divine,
 And am not of small concern
 In the universal scheme,
 For Infinitude in its sweep
 Hath taken thought of me,
 And its pledge, behold! is my Love!

FROM FAR MANHATTAN HEIGHTS

MYRIADS of years ago,
 On this island, Alpine snows
 Upsoared into summer's blue.
 But rain and frost and sun
 Throughout the eons at work
 Have worn them down almost

To the lapping of the tides.
 Now man uprears in their room
 His mountains of iron and stone, —
 Say rather, his Babel towers,
 Warring in purpose and speech,
 Which, instead of lifting him up
 An equal with the gods,
 Make him their laughing-stock,
 Yet haply are promise and pledge
 Of a greatness he yet shall achieve.

On the highest of these this morn,
 Under a sky as blue
 As ever smiled on the snows,
 For an hour we have taken our stand,
 Ere we go down to be one
 With the insect swarm on the ground.
 What shall we be down there?
 Here, on this height serene,
 In this angle of shining sea
 And teeming land, we are,
 We can be, but ourselves, —
 How shall it be below?
 What was the travail worth
 Of ages unreckonable
 That out of the primal mist
 Brought forth the earth and at last
 Brought forth ourselves, were it not
 That we should be ourselves?

Yet, what we are moved to do,
 Here on this sunny morn,
 Below on a winter night,
 In the rage of battle, the blast
 And sudden terror of fire,
 The blank of palsied wills
 When ships collide in the night,
 Or under summer's boughs
 With the voices of labor stilled, —
 What we are moved to do
 Will vary with every scene;
 And how shall it be below?
 How can we ever find
 In that storming whirl of selves,
 And keep, our very own?
 Far hence a day may dawn
 When man shall lean upon man
 In love and not for help;

But now, would we find ourselves,
 It must be not in toil for ourselves
 But in toil for others; so stands
 The law of the life of the world
 Whereinto we were born,
 Wherein alone we can live.

Oh! not with the glorious faith
 Of the sons of morn *we* toil;
 We cannot toil as they
 To make the world new-born
 In the space of the toiler's life.
 The utmost we can hope
 Is to advance by a step
 The progress of Justice on earth;
 To be content if we make
 A little lighter the toil
 Of reaping for them who have sown,
 A little harder their task
 To gather who have not strown;
 To think it much if we place
 More of the penalty
 For the ill days of the world
 On those who have brought them on,
 And less on the shoulders of them
 Who, bent with their burden of toil,
 Had neither voice nor hand
 In the shaping of the ill.
 And yet not all for the sake
 Of such small gains, we toil,
 But buoyed by hope and trust
 In the day we shall not see,
 And living all our lives
 With faces illuminate,
 Yea, roseate, in the glow
 Of the vision of its dawn.

So, in this world of ours,
 The world we see at our feet,
 Our only possible world,
 So alone can we be ourselves;
 And so in my heart I believe —
 Start not, my Love, nor shrink —
 Shall we, though one with the race
 Below us flaunting its hour, —

O glorious privilege,
 O more than mortal part! —
 Shall we, helping man to be man,
 Even we, help God to be God.

Let us go down, my Love;
 Life awaits us below.

AFTERSONG: THE HOLY GRAIL

As homeward through the snow,
 My daughter's hand in mine,
 I wend at eventide,
 My back to the sunset's flame,
 House after house, as I near,
 Yields not its wonted view
 Of shapes that flit within,
 Or faces that peer through the pane;
 But each is filled, indwelt,
 Yea, flooded, with crimson light,
 The mystic, living glow,
 Blood-red, of the Holy Grail.
 My walk becomes no more
 A walk, but a sacrament,
 And henceforth I shall see
 In every lowliest house
 Not merely a dwelling of men,
 But a halting-place of the Grail.

Go, little book, which my brain
 Has built for the dwelling-place
 Of a life long shared with my own,
 Of a soul I would have men love,
 And give them not alone
 Glimpses into that life,
 Revelings of that soul,
 But sometimes, if thou canst,
 Translate for men God's love,
 Writ large on cloud and sky,
 Into the warmth that fills
 The beating human heart,
 Which ever was, now is,
 And shall be evermore
 The only Holy Grail.

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